Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
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FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 25th November 2018: Anna Sagar, Jogipet. Meeting points: Opp. Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 6.00AM; Sangareddy tri-junction, 6.45AM.

The lake is quite widespread and should have good birding, with lots of migrants, including flamingos, avocets, etc. This would be a half-day trip. Carry water and lunch. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: Friday, 2nd November 2018, 6.30PM: SAVING FISHING CATS, SERVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES, SOLVING CLIMATE CHANGE: Talk by Ashwin Naidu

A Master's and Ph.D. in Wildlife Conservation and Management and a Carson Earth Fellow from the University of Arizona, member of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, and a TEDx speaker, Ashwin is the President and CEO of the Fishing Cat Conservancy. FCC's mission is to promote the long-term survival of fishing cats in the wild.

Trip Report – Ameenpur, August 28, 2018

Text: Anuraag Jonnalagadda; Photos: Madhuri Mondal

Ameenpur Lake

As winter was approaching, my friends and I decided to go to one of the lakes to look for migratory species. As if on cue, we got a mail from BSAP informing us about the next birding trip to Ameenpur Lake. So, on the 28th of October, we set out to Ameenpur Lake at 6:30AM with a group of about fifteen people. We were also joined by three cyclists from IIT Hyderabad. They had started at 4:30 in the morning and had cycled over 40km to be with us. It was a diverse group of people; there were some who were completely new to birding and there were experienced birders like Shafaat sir and Aasheesh sir.

Little Cormorant

From the bund we got a good view of the lake and were able to spot up to six pelicans. Other common birds around included Eurasian Coots (*Fulica atra*), Little (*Phalacrocorax niger*) and Great Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), White-browed Wagtails (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*), Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*) and River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*), among others.

There were many Dusky Crag Martins (*Ptyonoprogne concolor*) and Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) flying over us along with a few Wire-tailed Swallows (*Hirundo smithii*).

White Wagtail, Common Kingfisher, Little Cormorant

The next spot that we went to was a short distance away on the banks of the lake. From this spot, we could clearly see two beautiful Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) perched on a nearby tree. With his scope, Aasheesh sir showed us some of the plovers that were feeding at the water's edge. With his help, we were able to identify a Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), a Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) and a Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), although all of them seemed very similar to each other.

Other interesting finds here included two Knob-billed Ducks (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) which flew over us, Asian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) and Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*) nests, a few White Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*), a Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*), a Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), and a Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) which was also feeding with the sandpipers.

Baya Weaver nest

A Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) sitting on top of a nearby tree made for good viewing. The highlight was a thick 3-feet-long snake slithering in the water towards some Black-winged Stilts. We anticipated some action, but the snake just calmly moved along and the stilts did not even bother to move aside. While none of us was able to identify the snake since it was quite far away, the consensus was that it could have been a Checkered Keelback.

Cattle Egret, Glossy Ibis

Next, we moved onto a spot further ahead along the lake. Some interesting species that we saw here included a good number of River Terns, a Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and a Black-headed Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*). One of the new birders wanted to see the state bird of Telangana, the '*Pala Pitta'*, which he had heard a lot about. Barely 2 minutes later, an Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*) landed on a pole behind him, thereby fulfilling his wish almost instantly. There were good numbers of Green Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*), Scaly-breasted Munias (*Lonchura punctulata*) and Indian Silverbills (*Euodice malabarica*) at this place. We also got to see a Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*) and a Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*). By this time, it had become quite hot and many birds were soaring above us riding the thermals. We were fascinated to see a Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*) flying high up in the air. From down below, its thin neck was barely visible and it looked like a bird with just body and wings and no head.

Indian Silverbill

After some time spent watching these flying birds, we moved further ahead along the lake to a place surrounded by beautiful yellow fields. On the way, we crossed a few birds, which we assumed were ordinary sparrows. Later, we came to know that these were actually Chestnut-shouldered Petronias (*Gymnoris xanthocollis*), a.k.a. Yellow-throated Sparrows. We rushed back for a look but the birds had disappeared by then.

Back near the fields, a Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*) stayed with us for a while, moving from place to place before finally catching an insect and settling down. A bright blue White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), a Common Rose butterfly and a Common Jezebel butterfly were some colourful delights that we saw at this place.

The yellow fields and the blue waters beyond were indeed a wonderful sight and we tried our best to capture this in our group photo.

Pied Bushchat (female)

It was already past 9:30AM and so we decided to wind up for the day. The cyclists set off on their long journey; they were far beyond their planned schedule but were delighted, nevertheless, at having seen so many birds on their first outing. On our way back, we were lucky to spot two Red-naped Ibises (*Pseudibis papillosa*) sitting on top of an electric tower. Thus, we ended the day, pleased at having seen all the Ibis species found in India.

Ditch Jewel (*Brachythemis contaminata*) dragonfly

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SIGHTING OF A SPECIAL MIGRANT – RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

Text and Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati

Red-necked Phalarope

Rare sightings are always a treat for us in the birding community, and especially when we sight such a migrant **in** the city, we get more excited. In recent times in Hyderabad, we have had many such good encounters with these migrants, one of them being the Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*). It was first sighted at Fox Sagar Lake, Hyderabad in 2016 (as per the available reports) and thereafter every year – at the same location in 2017, and at Fox Sagar along with Osman Sagar and Ameenpur, this year. To our delight, two birds were spotted this time.

The Red-necked Phalarope is the smallest of the 3 Phalaropes; they generally breed in the mid- to high altitudes in the northern hemisphere, and winter in the south. During the migration season, they travel long distances from their breeding grounds, migrating over land and ocean to gather in the fall at saline lakes, before returning to the breeding areas. The bird we saw this time was very friendly, and was wading at the shore, not bothered by our presence in the vicinity. It was casually wading for food on the surface of the water, giving us plenty of opportunity for some good shots.

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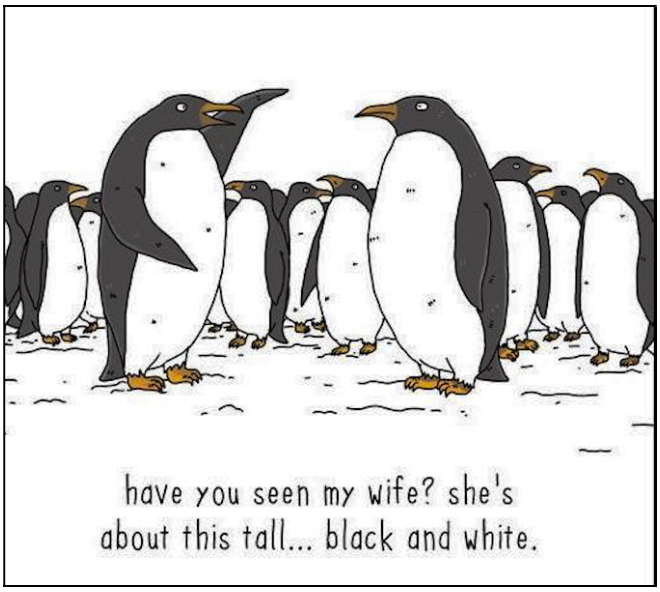
Bird Humour

Contributed by JVD Moorty



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Bird of the Month

Text and Photo: Umesh Mani

Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*)

Verditer Flycatcher (Sattal, April 22, 2015)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Eumyias*
Species: *E. thalassinus*
Size: 15-16 cm

Description & distribution: The Verditer Flycatcher is an Old World flycatcher, found across almost the entire Indian subcontinent (including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, but excluding Sri Lanka, which has an allied species, the Dull Blue Flycatcher, *Eumyias sordida)*, South-east Asia and east to Sumatra. The adult male bird is an intense turquoise, greenish or copper-sulphate blue all over, except for the black lores and bill base, and a grey vent. The adult female is duller and greyer, and has dusky lores. The juvenile bird has grey-brown upperparts with a turquoise cast and fine orange-buff spotting, while the underparts are brown with bold orange-buff spotting; it also has wings and tail similar to the adult but with buff tips on the coverts.

Habitat & behaviour: The Verditer Flycatcher is generally seen singly, in deciduous, evergreen or light coniferous forests, open areas, groves and gardens. It prefers exposed perches like tree tops or bare branches, from where it makes aerial sallies to hawk insects and flies. It is different from other flycatchers in that it prefers to forage above the canopy level. The song consists of a series of rapid, undulating, jingling notes; it is silent in winter.

Nesting: The Verditer Flycatcher breeds mainly between April and July, in the Himalayas. The nest is usually a thick-sided cup made of moss, root hair, grass etc, among exposed roots of trees, under eaves of houses, or inside holes in walls or embankments. The usual clutch consists of 4 pale pink eggs with a darker cap-like ring at the broad end.

Local name: The Verditer Flycatcher is known as *'Nili tik-tiki'* in Punjabi, '*Harithnil makhimar*' or *'Piroji makhimar'* in Gujarati, *'Nil katkatia'* or *'Puthir chitta'* in Bengali and *'Neelameni'* in Malayalam.

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For Private Circulation Only
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